

**Engaging Elderly Theatre Patrons:
Identifying Strategies that are Good for Patrons and Good for the Theatres**

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Dedication

To my loving husband Glen, thank you for believing in me and all your support.

To my family, friends, and co-workers, thank you for your encouragement.

To my parents who understood the importance of engaging in the arts.

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Chapter I

Introduction

Keeping our aging arts patrons engaged in the theatre is good for their health and good for the health of the theatre. I base this statement on a multisite study conducted by Washington University professor Dr. Gene Cohen in 2006 “Research on Creativity and Aging: The Positive Impact of the Arts on Health and Illness” The study placed older adults in arts programs run by professional artists and tested them to see the effects of arts participation in their lives in a community setting. According to Dr. Cohen:

These community based art programs run by professional artists can have powerful positive intervention effects, with the benefits being true gains in health promotion and disease prevention. ...the results reveal a positive impact on maintaining independence and on reducing dependency. Thus, these community-based cultural programs for older adults appear to be reducing risk factors that contribute to the need for long-term care.

(Cohen 13)

These findings support the concept that engaging our elderly theatre patrons with professional artists will keep them in good health. This study also encourages those who administrate theatres to continue to keep their elderly patrons engaged and create programming to promote interaction and learning experiences with their artists.

My research found that the majority of theatre patrons are 55 years of age and older, white, and educated. They are patrons who in varying capacities commit time, funds and support to the theatre by purchasing season tickets, working on the boards, advising on committees,

ushering, or partaking in general volunteerism in the theatre. Overtime the make-up of this group transitioned from the Silent Generation to the Baby Boomer Generation. So why should theatre administrators worry about their engagement since the elderly are already stewards of the arts? Shouldn't theatre resources go towards bringing in more youthful audiences? Do current trends to use technology to communicate hinder or help the relationship? As changes in: financial situations, physical capabilities, health, taste in art, available leisure time and living locations occur with elderly patrons as they age, what can theatres administrators do to meet these changing needs?

The Purpose of the Paper

The purpose of this paper is to answer these questions, incorporate the findings of an applied project with research and suggest new strategies on how to keep the elderly theatre patron engaged. This paper will define: the elderly theater patron, different types of engagement, the role data collection and analysis play, how accessibility accommodations can increase engagement, ways new technologies can expand the reach of the theatre production and how telling the story of the elderly patron through the use of technology can stimulate new audiences. The conclusion provides the result of the applied project with recommendations on how to keep the elderly theatre patron engaged.

Theatre administrators are the intended audience of this paper. These are directors of theatres who are responsible for the marketing, development, operations, and ticketing and facilitate the many day-to-day operations of the theater by promoting and organizing artistic performances that fulfill the mission of the organization.

The Applied Project

I developed a panel discussion presentation for the members of the Ticketing Services Group of the Upper Midwest (TSG). An association of box office professionals representing museums, performing arts centers, athletic, state fair, casinos and convention venues as well as ticketing vendors. The purpose of the organization is to share ideas, information, knowledge and experiences as well as learning opportunities for the members. The invited discussion panelists were specialists in the fields of: data analysis, communication technological for the elderly and staff training and development. The panel title was “Ticketing and Accommodations: Working with Elderly Patrons” and the discussion was about facilities and programs and what barriers exist that may curtail the continue engagement of our elderly patrons. TSG members expressed that the elderly are very influential within their organizations and creating new ways to engage them is essential to their organizational work. The panel discussion and subsequent verbal and written reports presented to the TSG members, following the discussion, provided them helpful hints and organizational resources to assist them in their work.

The aging of our theatre audiences is not a new topic for theatre administrators. The use of social media, email messaging, blogs, and websites to communicate, sell tickets, advertise, market, and solicit donations are new and effect the continued engagement of the elderly patron.

Chapter II

The Influence of the Baby Boomer

Statistics and Demographics

According to report by the American Alliance of Museums “TrendsWatch 2013: Back to the Future”, the wealth of society is in the hands of the Baby Boomer and they will soon control “70 percent of the nation’s disposable income” (9). The U.S. Census Bureau predicts that by 2030, the 65 years of age and older population will double. A Pew Research Center 2010 study, “Baby Boomers Retire” states “...every day for the next 19 years, 10,000 baby boomers will reach age 65. The aging of this huge cohort of Americans (26% of the total U.S. population are Baby Boomers) will dramatically change the composition of the country” (Pew Research Center).

My research found that the members of the Ticketing Services Group of the Upper Midwest (TSG) were experiencing this dramatic change in the demographic make-up within their own audiences. Baby Boomers became the main focal point of the panel discussion. These are patrons who use multiple communication channels to learn about marketing offers and to communicate with organizations. Social media, blogs, email, phone and in-person methods are all used to purchase tickets and make donations. These engagement channels create new challenges for the organizations. It was determined at the panel discussion that an increase in staff services was needed to respond to written communications. When this group demands services they frequently seek to persuade the organization to raise service levels in exchange for their fundraising support. This persuasion can be tacit or overt.

During the discussion, participants inquired whether organizations were using the right methods of communication and proper terminology to keep the Baby Boomers engaged. Baby

Boomers, as the term is defined comprise an 18 year age span. This means the group is actually fairly diverse with regard to age. This may be why the group found that Baby Boomers as a group did not want to be referred to as “senior citizens”. Further, profiling them in certain other ways can offend them. For example as active adults, able body older patrons, patrons with limited disabilities, or disabled older adults are all terms currently being used. If this group was to stay engaged, the panel concludes that word choice mattered to this demographic.

Donor Giving

The Baby Boomer generation is now the leader in giving to the arts. According to a StarTribune article “Philanthropy Beat: Baby Boomers Donate More to Charities than any Other Generation” by Jean Hopfensperger, she writes in August 2013

Baby boomers donate more money to charities and nonprofits than any other generational group in this country, a study has found. Boomers account for 43 percent of charitable giving while making up about one-third of the population, according to a study commissioned by Blackbaud Inc., a South Carolina-based company that specializes in nonprofit software and services. Boomers, those people ages 49 to 67, not only dominate philanthropy today but will do so in the future, the report said. (Hopfensperger)

With Baby Boomers taking the lead in donating to the arts, if theatre administrators wish to generate new donors, it is essential to create new strategies to engage them as mentors to younger donors. The study by Blackbaud Inc., referred to by Ms. Hopfensperger, is called “The Next Generation of American Giving: A Study on the Contrasting Charitable Habits of Generation Y, Generation X, Baby Boomers And Matures”. The authors of the study Vinay Bhagat, Pam Loeb and Mark Rovner described the way various generations of donors actually engage in charitable giving:

Younger donors described themselves as much more random and peer motivated in their giving, in contrast to older donors who described themselves as more premeditated.

Specifically, younger donors are more likely to support a charity when friends/ family ask versus the charity asking them. They consider much of their giving relatively random based upon their emotional reaction to something in the media, or based upon who asks.

... The best way to reach them is either through inspirational stories in the media or better still, via their friends. (10)

Theatre administrators can use new strategies such as social media, blogs, and website testimonials to their advantage since younger generations are influenced through these means. By capturing and conveying the Baby Boomer's reason for giving through these new communication tools, younger generations can be inspired to give.

Health and Lifestyle Changes

Baby Boomers' lives evolve just like the lives of younger age groups. Baby Boomers' financial situations, their physical capabilities, health, taste in art, available leisure time, and living locations all can change over time. At some point they may become patrons with disabilities, but they do not see themselves that way. These changes in elderly patrons influenced my research. It also influenced the panel discussion because we all realized we must provide services to and engage the elderly without applying the stigma of being part of a group with disabilities. It takes a conscious effort to watch the patterns of change and to utilize new strategies for engagement. In addition, we must be sensitive to whether patrons have vision problems and can no longer drive at night. Or whether they have become hard-of-hearing and find it difficult to hear theatre productions. As well, the use of a walker or wheelchair often

impedes patrons' ability to get to the theatre on their own. The panel concludes that the patrons can stay engaged for longer periods of time if the theatres market their accessible amenities, make this information easy to find in theatre materials, train the staff to explain accessibility options, and train them to listen and react to the patrons' changing situations.

Accessibility Leads to Engagement at Guthrie Theater

The Guthrie Theater, which is recognized by many as one of the leading repertory theatres in the world, has an accessibility department and leads the country in supplying accessibility services to its patrons. It established that department in the 1980s when it first started its American Sign Language (ASL) Interpreted performances for the deaf. This came about as the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was enacted along with its regulations. The Guthrie acquired special listening devices, audio description equipment for the visually impaired, and it contracted services to produce programs and other marketing pieces in Braille. It created a leasing and lending program for this equipment so other arts organization could use it.

The Guthrie's accessibility department manager is familiar with the ADA and its regulations. The manager constantly surveys the Guthrie's audiences to see if the theatre is meeting the patrons' needs. He develops methods to interpret the audience's needs and trains the ticket office staff and other staff members regarding how to service patrons. The Guthrie expanded its services from offering audio descriptive performance in 1992 to offering open captioning with use of a LED display screen in 2007. Audio descriptions are done real-time, from the lighting booth so the describer does not have to be in the house and disturb other patrons while talking. The LED display is placed to the right of the stage. Specific seats are sold to patrons requiring this service so they can view the caption and look easily across the stage to see the action at the same time. It also allows other patrons the opportunity to read captions thus

alleviating any stigma for those who do not want to wear a hearing device or ask for accessible seating.

On June 25, 2006, the Guthrie opened its new facility. Thereafter, the accessibility department manager found that many areas of the facility were not suitable for people with disabilities. Some of the issues found were whether the area leading out to their river overlook was too steep for wheelchairs, or whether the lobby was too dark for patrons who have problems with low lighting. Some fixtures in the lobby were dangerous to visually impaired patrons because they hang a foot or two above the floor making it difficult to detect with a cane which can sweep under the fixture causing the patron to walk into it. The Guthrie's vestibule had a doorway that was hard to see and patrons were walking into the glass. Many of these issues have been remedied, such as the addition of lights in the lobbies and the placement of a design on the vestibule glass so patrons can see the glass wall. The Guthrie continually evaluates issues and makes changes in order to comply with ADA regulations.

The Guthrie developed its website to comply with the ADA rules following recommendations of the Great Lakes ADA Center and local ADA affiliated organizations. For example all its website graphics utilized a JAW reader, which converts the textual information into audible descriptions.

The Guthrie's website states, "Each year, more than 40,000 patrons take advantage of the Theater's Access Services programs for patrons with disabilities or economic barriers" (Guthrie Theater).

The Guthrie seems truly committed to creating an environment for the inclusion of all audience members and is a great example of what can be done by a theatre to keep its patrons engaged as their lives change.

Chapter III

Engagement

What is Engagement?

Engagement, as a term used in the arts, is an encounter that leaves a lasting impression for the arts patron. Engagement starts when the audience member first contacts the theatre for a ticket and continues upon entering the theatre. Engagement is the audience member sitting and watching the performance, but includes all the experiences surrounding the attendance of the performance. In the book *The Audience Experience: A Critical Analysis of Audiences in the Performing Arts*, the authors Jennifer Radbourne, Hilary Glow and Katya Johanson write:

When we talk about audience engagement we talk about audiences both experiencing and remembering. Audiences go to the theatre to be engaged in the experience of the moment and in the subsequent recollections of it. ... Arts audience engagement is central to the artistic mission of most arts institutions and the aim of measuring the audience experience is, ultimately, to maximize and deepen those experiences. (xiv)

The focus of this paper is how the current needs of elderly theatre patrons differ from those of younger audience members and how those needs can and should be met for the elderly to keep them engaged in the arts.

Why Engagement is Important

Elderly theatre patrons are a great resource and stewards of the arts. Therefore, their engagement is also important to society. Further, they make up the large portion of current arts appreciators. A study, “Cultivating Demand for the Arts: Arts Learning, Arts Engagement, and State Arts Policy” created for State Arts Agencies (SAAs), the authors Laura Zakaras and Julia Lowell reported:

Beyond the artist's creative act and the work of art that he or she produces, there are the people who are "arts appreciators," that is, who appreciate the arts and seeks repeated arts encounters. The quality of those encounters—the level of emotional and mental engagement people experience with works of art—is critical to the creation of a range of benefits that enhance personal lives and contribute to the public welfare in ways that go beyond economics. People who experience high levels of engagement with works of art move imaginatively and emotionally into different worlds; broaden their field of reference beyond the confines of their own lives; exercise their capacity for empathy; develop faculties of perception, interpretation, and judgment; and form bonds with others who find in some works of art the expression of what whole communities of people have experienced (McCarthy et al., 2004). If the number of arts appreciators shrinks with succeeding generations, the cultivation of these humanizing effects will decline as well. (4)

This study also found that arts education is a key component in keeping large numbers of Americans involved in the arts.

Expanding upon the elderly's benefits to society is their role in mentoring future generations of arts appreciators.

Research suggests that early arts experiences, arts education, and the valuing of the arts by family members and peers dispose one toward arts participation. Children who are provided with little or no experience or study of the arts are less likely to become arts participants as adults. (Zakaras and Lowell 4)

The elderly arts patrons can be a component of this educational experience by being mentors to younger generations and do so by bringing their family members and friends to the theatre. This creates future engagement.

Theatres have incorporated educational programs and educational outreach within their programs. The funding available through grants helps drive this pursuit to educate. In addition, theatres are creating activities surrounding a theater's main event. These activities include socializing with artists before or after events, partaking in pre or post discussions, collaborating with other artistic organizations to expand the learning experience, and developing websites to incorporate videos, blogs, newsletters, commentary, and informational pages about the event. This continuation of the learning experience shows patrons what to notice and value in their arts encounter and facilitates the patrons' continued engagement.

Types of Engagement

Websites

The first-point-of-contact for many theatre patrons is the organization's website and its ticket ordering pages. The design of these sites can be subtle, but is very important. Many elderly patrons have difficulty navigating, reading, and ordering on websites. According to the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP), by incorporating certain design elements such as: increasing font sizes to 12 to 14 point, using certain color palettes, and making the flow of the site logical with minimum pop-ups will ease website usage by the elderly. Theatres can keep elderly audience members engaged by incorporating these same elements. Not making these changes ends-up disengaging them and creating embarrassing experiences and feelings of frustration and defeat.

On the Ticketing Services Group of the Upper Midwest (TSG) panel discussion, panelist Jane Tygesson, a consultant from ArtSage, talked about the importance of website interface design and the techniques that should be implemented to make these interfaces useable by patrons with varying technical capabilities. Other considerations for the panel were the physical changes of the patron, such as lessening of sight, hearing, and hand mobility, which also adversely affects website use. It is important to take into consideration the navigation of the site so patrons can easily understand how to get to the information as well. Helpful hints and tips for better design should be utilized. Many of these are provided by local disability service organizations following the guidelines for the ADA and in materials provided by AARP. The panel concluded that more group discussion and helpful tips were needed to uncover more ways to engage patrons in the way our website influence the experience.

Customer Relationship Management Systems

The box office staff can also be a first point of contact for many older patrons. They call the box office to make a phone reservation or visit the ticket office in-person to get event tickets. The reservations are captured using computerized ticketing systems. These systems are called Customer Relationship Management (CRM) systems. CRMs capture event ordering and donation data, store buying history, demographic information, and allow buying relationship analytics. The data captured give a historical picture of the patron's buying patterns as well as providing detailed information about their buying needs.

Data Collection and Analysis

When used and analyzed, the collected data is a vital resource which can give theatre administrators a better understanding of their audience and audience needs leading to new

engagement opportunities. In my research I found a great resource in the Amherst H. Wilder Research Foundation. Wilder has performed data analysis, assisted with focus groups, helped determine emerging trends in the market place, and measured the effectiveness of theatres' programming and organizational services as it applies to the elderly. They are willing to share their research as well as provide a trained resource team and the analytical tools to help theatre administrators learn how to best leverage their data analysis. Arts organizations can use this as a valuable resource to help the elderly stay engaged when they design new programs and experiences aimed at the elderly patron.

Denise Hahn Huynh, Research Associate for the Amherst H. Wilder Foundation served as a panelist for the TSG discussion. She stated that studying data and using analytical techniques in creative ways, and inviting patrons to be involved in focus group outcomes, facilitates a better understanding of patrons' experiences. She said that elderly patrons' participation in focus groups and studies increase the elderly patrons' engagement with the theatre and expand their knowledge of it.

In the book *The Audience Experience: A Critical Analysis of Audiences in the Performing Arts*, the authors argue with regard to data and data analysis that:

We do not know how to describe – the benefits that audiences derive from arts experiences. 'Many who work in the arts, including those of us who so do because of our belief in the transformative power of art, lack a vernacular for communicating its impacts' (Brown & Novak 2007:5), ... If we are able to move beyond thinking of audience research in terms of collecting data on visitor satisfaction, we can start to conceive of how arts attendance relates to the intrinsic benefits of cultural engagement. In

so doing we can develop a deep and detailed understanding of how the arts affect the lives of those who engage them. (Radbourn Glow and Johanson 12)

Staff Encounters

As a first line of potential engagement, box office staffs interact with elderly patrons every day. It is essential to keep the box office staff trained and to develop a skilled staff that is equipped to handle any situation and empowered to deal with diverse audiences. As part of the TSG panel make-up it was important to include someone who can train in this area. Jane Tygesson, a consultant from Artsage, an organization whose focus is in training artists and organizations to work with the elderly, was one of the three TSG panel members. She introduced to TSG members an additional resource for that training and suggested to expand the idea of training to include a specific focus on how to engage elderly patrons in their theatre experience.

Engaging Care Givers

Another means of engaging elderly patrons is through their care givers. It is critical to create amenities in the theatre that encourage care givers to come with the patron to the theatre. Adverse changes in health may prevent the elderly from attending theatre events. When they no longer attend the theatre they also may not respond to the theater's marketing outreach efforts. Theatres can engage the care givers by advertising on websites or placing written materials in offices frequented by both the elderly patron and their care givers, such as doctors' clinics, banks, financial planning services, medical centers, health insurance companies, libraries and senior centers. Outreach through these channels can be an effective means of keeping the valued elderly patron engaged.

Museum Engagement Can Influence Theatre Engagement

Minneapolis Star Tribune reporter Mary Abbe states in her article “Minneapolis Institute of Arts Goes Beyond Art to Reach New Audience”:

Art is no longer enough for most art museums to succeed. ‘Engagement’ is a buzzword at museums across the country. The Dallas Museum of Art stays open until midnight once a month with free films, DJs, poetry slams and even yoga for kids. The restaurant at Atlanta’s High Museum of Art is so popular it’s open more hours than the museum. Already renowned for its film center, Oregon’s Portland Art Museum is now touting its rentable event spaces, including two wedding-perfect ballrooms (Abbe).

Hunter Wright, the Minneapolis Institute of Arts (MIA) director was quoted as saying in Mary Abbe’s article,

We want to offer more reasons for more people to come here more often....That means raising the level of amenities to present a seamless experience that matches the level of the art....The end game in all this is to develop a public that says, ‘Oh, I’ve never heard of Artist X, but I don’t care because everything the MIA does is spectacular (Abbe).’

An example of MIA’s expanded offerings to increase engagement in the museum, specifically for the elderly, was MIA’s “Discover Your Story” tours. These tours were designed for the elderly with memory loss, their families, and care givers. TSG panelist Jane Tygesson, consultant from Artsage, wrote about the tours in her handbook, *Opening Doors to Memory and Imagination: Creating a Museum Program for People with Memory Loss*. The tours were “inspired by New York City’s Museum of Modern Art’s program, *Meet Me at MOMA*” (Tygesson 3). MIA’s program went on to inspire a member of the Helen Bader Foundation who

initiated funding for similar tour programs for five Wisconsin museums. These museums engaged the elderly by creating amenities, social events, and educational opportunities within their facilities and collaboratively worked together to learn from each other on how to create these programs. In her handbook, Ms. Tygesson continues to educate with tips of how to create educational programs for elderly patrons with memory loss. The tips in the handbook and the story of how the collaborative ventures of these museums created these programs can be used as a tool to help theatre administrators create expanded engaging programs for the elderly.

During the TSG panel discussion questions and answers, Peter Wright, Group Sales Manager for the Science Museum of Minnesota, spoke about how the museum devised special greeting areas for what they call their active adult tour groups. The tour groups arrive at the museum through private entrances. Special greeting areas are set up so patrons can socialize, learn more about the exhibit, and get a chance to acclimate to the museum, have personal contact with the staff, and avoid the jostling and confusion of going in through the main entrance. The exhibit tours are timed to take place after morning and before evening rush hours, allowing them to arrive more easily and in daylight. After the tour they gather again in the greeting area to socialize before leaving the museum. The group engagement enhances the overall experience and is more than just a visit to an exhibit.

Theatre administrators should use what museums are learning about engagement to expand their programs to entice the elderly to stay involved and expand their involvement. Collaboration among arts organizations in building upon established research and reporting on what works and what does not, will help leverage the research and the work already done and lead to more effective engagement programming for more theatres.

Chapter IV

Technology: Expanding Performance beyond the Walls of the Theatre

Advances in technology allow greater access and options to see theatrical productions outside the theatre. Two types of technology help to expand the performance beyond the walls of the theatre and keep audiences engaged. They are Alternative Content, also called Event Cinema, and Live Streaming. These technologies create the option to see live productions remotely which are taking place in various locations throughout the world.

Event Cinema

Event Cinema is the result of digitally streaming a live performance in high-definition (HD) and transmitting the performance via satellite to cinemas. The cinema industry's new technological standard is causing many movie theatres to replace the 35 millimeter projector with digital equipment making these types of broadcasts possible. The Metropolitan Opera of New York City, the Royal Opera House of London, and the Sydney Opera House are just a few of the many theatre arts organizations that are working with movie houses and creating series around HD digital streaming broadcasts .

Jenny Gilbert, a writer for The Independent, reports in the article "Dance Review: Swan Lake in 3D - From Russia, with Love... and an Extra Dimension", about the first ballet production streamed:

... Mariinsky Theatre's production of Swan Lake was streamed to some 900 cinemas worldwide and 150 in the UK. These were mostly towns that don't get to see ballet in any

shape or form. ... Russia went a step further in technical cinema production by broadcasting the ballet *Swan Lake* in 3D. It used the 3D technology that was also used to film *Avatar* and *Life of PI*. (Gilbert)

The United Kingdom's (UK) British Museum joined the ranks of artistic organizations using Event Cinema. According to their website blog, “AD 79 in HD: Broadcasting Pompeii Live”, Tim Plyming, head of digital media and publishing for the museum writes:

... This ‘private tour’ experience is of course not one that we can offer every visitor to the Museum but through a special event such as Pompeii Live we can, for one night and using the power of live satellite broadcasting, bring that experience directly into cinemas across the UK. We are thrilled at visitors planning to join us from as far afield as Thurso, Swansea, Belfast, Plymouth and Norwich. (Plyming)

Event Cinema allows people of all ages in smaller communities a chance to see artistic events taking place in major metropolis without having to travel long distances to get there.

The Physical Experience

The Event Cinema broadcasts afford elderly patrons an alternative so they can attend a live broadcast in a local movie theatre. The performance may take place in another part of the city or in another part of the country, but patrons see it in real-time. The tickets are a portion of the cost of the theatre tickets. The cinema audience shares the experience with two audiences, the live theatre audience and the cinema audience. Sitting in a cinema is a less formal setting than in the theatre. Elderly patrons with physical or other challenges going to a live broadcast may come and

go as necessary when viewing the performance in a movie theatre without disrupting the live performance.

Martin Barker, Emeritus Professor of Film Studies at Aberystwyth University, UK, in a report about “‘Live at a Cinema near You’: How Audiences Respond to Digital Streaming of the Arts”, interviewed patrons about their experience. One patron said:

Better view, better price, the addition of the interesting interviews, makes this experience preferable. There was a feeling of ‘liveness’ so much so that I wanted to clap but felt a bit silly doing so. I missed this – the opportunity to respond with applause to performers who could hear that applause. I liked the intervals with drinks just as at the event itself for the opportunity of relaxing and chatting with others about the performance in progress (Radbourne, Glow and Johanson 30).

It appears that elderly patrons are taking advantage of this new technology. Surveys conducted by both the Metropolitan Opera and the United Kingdom’s National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts (NESTA) confirm that the majority of the audience members are the elderly. A review of these studies by Professor Barker provides:

The audience for Alternative Cinema [Event Cinema] is considerably older than normal cinema audiences. ...The Met’s research, while broadly agreeing [with the NESTA study], did find a slightly higher proportion of younger audiences. This upwards age skew does have broad implications, not just in terms of a change in cinemas’ reach, but also because of the different expectations that older audiences may have of venues (general facilities, noise management, intervals and the like). The pieces of research agree that more women than men

attend these performances – with 60.7 percent women to 39.3 percent men. Women also reported higher levels of repeat attendance than men, particularly for the minority art form, ballet. (21)

These results show the elderly audience can influence the production value of these broadcasts by the fact that they make-up the majority of the viewing audiences. This affords them another level of engagement to the artistic organization presenting the broadcast.

Liveness

Event Cinema is a virtual experience. Professor Barker in his study of Event Cinema explores the concept of how alive the experience is to the audience or what he calls liveness and its seven aspects:

1. Physical co–presence with performers and performance.
2. Simultaneity with the performance.
3. Direct engagement and absence of intervening (technology) mediation.
4. Sense of the ‘locale’ within the experience.
5. Sense of interaction with performers.
6. Sense of interaction with others in the audience.
7. Intensified experiences/participation through sensing any of the above. (20).

A review of Barker’s study shows it is important to Event Cinema audience members that the broadcast take place in real-time. Also essential to this audience’s experience is hearing and seeing the live theatre audience as both audiences watch the performance. The Event Cinema

provides more value to cinema audiences while they view it live than if the broadcast was recorded for later viewing.

The production value of the cinema broadcast is as important as the production value of the live performance. A strong component of having a good production is skilled camera work. The Event Cinema audience is reliant on what the camera is showing them compared to a live performance where the theatre audience can independently look where they want. This independence is of high value to any audience member. Therefore the quality of the camera work greatly determines the audience member's satisfaction.

But the Event Cinema camera has advantage over the independent audience viewer because it can go to areas of the live production the theatre audience is not permitted to go. Some of the additional behind the scenes camera work which is added to the Event Cinema audience experience are pre-performance interviews in the artists' dressing rooms, backstage scene changes, and on stage for artists' close-ups. All enhance the Event Cinema audience experience.

Professor Barker continues the review and the results of the NESTA study and he explains:

They found that while audiences at the cinema went in with lower expectations of the event, they reported consistently higher levels of emotional engagement than those at the theatre.

Yet, most intriguingly, theatre and cinema attendees attached the same degree of attachment to the liveness of the event. (22)

The Metropolitan Opera in New York City (the Met) was the first to stream productions to cinemas. Through their Event Cinema production trials and advancements they have learned these productions can broaden their audience engagement especially for the elderly.

Metropolitan Opera - Cinema Series

The Metropolitan Opera in New York City (the Met) transmitted from the opera house a condensed version of Mozart's *The Magic Flute* to select cinemas via satellite on December 30, 2006. These broadcasts are called The Met: Live in HD. The Met has produced over 1,000 broadcasts throughout the United States and the world. The broadcasts take place at cinemas at off-peak times allowing the cinemas and the Met to bring culture to the masses while increasing revenues for both organizations.

The Met: Live in HD announced their 2014-15 on their website. Here is the announcement,

The ninth season of The Met: Live in HD, which is the world's leading alternative cinema content series and currently reaches more than 2,000 theaters in 65 countries, will open on October 11 (2014) with Verdi's *Macbeth*. ...Nine additional matinee performances, including all six new productions, will be transmitted over the course of the season. (The Metropolitan Opera)

In creating its new series of programs, the Met increased their matinee offerings. This programmatic change is a great example of theatre administrators expanding the engagement of their elderly audience and giving them greater opportunity to get involved with their organization.

The Met's broadening of audience engagement reaches to other countries. In this interview a of a Metropolitan Opera attendee from the UK this patron compares his experience in the cinema to the live performances he has experienced. He states,

Having attended the Metropolitan Opera in New York many times ... I find the experience more intense and gripping at the cinema. The Met is such a huge and cavernous space that I felt very little connection with what was happening on stage. On the cinema screen, being able to see the faces of the singers and registering the emotions they convey offers a far better experience. The sound in the multiplexes is also surprisingly more vibrant and involving than a live set-up. In addition I find the UK cinema audiences at these events far more attentive and better behaved than the American audiences at the Met where talking, eating and fidgeting can prove extremely annoying. (Radbourne, Glow and Johanson 23)

Both the theatre and the audience win in this new cinema experience. The theatre wins with increased revenue and in reaching audiences they would otherwise be unable to reach. The audience wins in being able to attend performances at a fraction of the cost, in a familiar setting, and at a time of day they prefer.

Live Streaming

Live Streaming is the second type of technology that is developing. It delivers digital content in real-time over the Internet, not necessarily to cinemas, but to personal computers, home media equipment, or mobile devices. Although Live Streaming provides the liveness experience, the delivery and accessibility is very different from Event Cinema where the production is much bigger and produced to play to larger audiences. Live Streaming gives the audience member the option to share the experience or keep the experience intimate and view it by themselves.

Live Streaming is used by orchestras who work with public radio stations to broadcast live performances to patron's media systems. It is a viable solution to an elderly patron who

can't attend an orchestra concert in person and help grow radio stations listenership. But the control and growth of the revenue streams seen by the cinema and the arts organization using Event Cinema is not as easily attained when using Live Streaming. The arts organizations find it harder to control: audience use and experience, ticket revenue, and rebroadcast of the production. These remain concerns and are restricting the use of Live Streaming to a wider arts audience.

HomeStream - Live Streaming to the Home

Miriam Ackerman, from HomeStream was one of the three panelists for the Ticketing Services Group of the Upper Midwest (TSG) discussion. HomeStream is an emerging organization in Minneapolis. HomeStream is developing methods to stream live theatre and other such broadcasts into the homes of seniors in an easy and convenient way. She stated that HomeStream has a special interface for mobile devices making it easy for the elderly to communicate with their family, social and health care organizations. The object of the service is to enhance the quality of life by making communication accessible to the elderly.

Theatre administrators can work with HomeStream to coordinate an event hookup for patrons who call and state that they are unable to attend an event because of bad weather, or they have gone out of state, or their health is interfering with them attending the performance. The patron still interested in seeing and experiencing the performance and have the technology available to them to do so. These patrons would receive a private connection to their computer or mobile device allowing them to still be a part of the live broadcast. If care givers or family members are also present than it is an experience that can mentor new audiences. The patrons' tickets for the theatre would be released for others to purchase thus expanding the capacity of the viewing audience and increasing revenues. The TSG members saw the potential of this new

technology and the possibility of increased viewing, keeping the elderly patron engaged and the theatre broadening their audience base.

Finally, in addition to live streaming programs, Miriam presented to the TSG members an example of the unique interface HomeStream uses on mobile devices and computer systems. The interface is very easy to read and interpret. She suggested that these design elements could be incorporated into ticket sales websites easing the elderly patrons' ticket ordering process.

Chapter V

Conclusion

The health of theatres is dependent on the health of the theatre patrons. The makeup of theatre audiences is currently largely composed of Baby Boomers and the elderly. Those staying engaged using theatres as a healthy part of their lives, help sustains the life of the theatre and patrons themselves. There is a synchronicity between the relationship of changes in arts organizations and changes in patrons.

Engaged Elderly Patron Are Valuable Theatre Resource

This current demographic situation presents a wonderful opportunity for the Baby Boomer generation which has the wealth, life longevity and therefore the potential to continue to participate and invigorate the theatre through their continued participation. Theatre administrators can engage Baby Boomers for longer periods of time through specialized staff training techniques and creative communication strategies geared toward this generation. By capturing their stories through Customer Management Systems, analyzing this data, and inviting them to participate in focus groups, the theatre administrator can understand the elderly patron's changing needs and make accommodations to meet these needs.

Leveraging Technology

Theatre administrators must be attentive to changes in the aging population and use technology effectively to facilitate and extend their participation. The relationship between the audience and technology is important. Technology can either help or hinder this relationship. An example of an effective use of technology is the extension of artistic presentations beyond the walls of the theatre with Cinema Live and Live Streaming. The experience of watching these

virtual presentations can keep liveness of the theatre going and create additional engagement options for the elderly when attending a live performance isn't possible. Engaging the elderly patron and extending the relationship through technology is found to be beneficial to the theatre as well through increase revenue and viewership.

Healthy Relationships

My research found that participation in the arts can help extend life and enrich that life. I truly believe in the healing aspects of the arts. A diverse and all-inclusive theatre environment can be created by keeping elderly patrons actively engaged. Theatre administrators can create educational programming to enhance the hands-on artistic experience, expand their accessibility services and add to the amenities of the hall to increase social opportunities for their elderly and thus increase engagement. In return, the older generation of patrons, mainly Baby Boomers, knows how to give to the arts and does so readily, can mentor younger generations to be donors, audience members, board members and stewards of the arts and add to the health of the arts organization.

The Applied Project

The applied project drove the development of this paper and furthered the research. I found it to be an opportunity to bring together theatre administrators and three panelists, experts in their field, who helped generate ideas and expand the interest of elderly patron engagement.

The Ticketing Services Group of the Upper Midwest (TSG) members and the panelists understood the importance of engaging the elderly in order to sustain their organizations.

Through the panel discussion the panelists and TSG attendees realized:

- that terminology matters when marketing to the Baby Boomer

- data analysis can help determine how to make changes in policies and processes to create engagement opportunities
- strategies in website design for ordering tickets should be easy and meet the physical changes that take place in the elderly patron
- advancement in technology can be used to further engage the elderly
- many TSG members already have good methodology to attract and keep the older patron engaged
- continued collaboration between TSG members is a valuable resource and may lead to new strategies of engagement to help both arts and community organizations expand theatre outreach to affirmatively include the elderly patron

In conclusion the applied project and further research created an opportunity to delve into the ways we are engaging our elderly patrons in a theatre setting and learn that there are still ways to expand methods of engagement and engagement techniques. Arts organization can utilize them and collaborate with others to create an all-inclusive environment for the elderly.

TSG panelist Jane Tygesson states in her handbook the guiding principle for museum tour programs are: “Inclusivity, accessibility, creativity, exchange, community, and respect...” (Tygesson 53) and they can be the guiding principles for theatre administrators to help keep elderly patrons engaged as well.

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